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Baptism and Faith

The Council and Human Life

New Dutch Catechism (1)

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IT SEEMS TO ME

Trust or Fear?

When Pope John announced his determination to convene an Ecumenical Council, many of us were overjoyed and profoundly grateful. It seemed clear that this was an imperative need to carry out the uncompleted tasks of Trent and of Vatican I. But the vast changes in our world and the mountain of new human problems this creates for Christians and their neighbors could only be met by profound Christian reflection and a fundamental remedy of the widest possible scope.

Whenever we had misgivings about publicizing many deeply-rooted defects in the Church—and deficiencies turned up in unlikely places—the pope who had the wisdom and courage to call the Council was there with abundant reassurance. His living faith in Christ's Spirit enabled him to meet all obstacles and embarrassments with smiling confidence. And his unshakable conviction that Christ's Spirit still abided in the Church moved him to reject and oppose those he characterized as "prophets of gloom."

It seems appropriate to recall all this at a time when we face the prodigious task of implementing the huge renewal launched by Vatican II. Able commentators have declared that this Council—guided by Pope John and then Pope Paul—made a more searching inquiry into the needs of mankind and the necessary fundamental cures than has been undertaken by any other congress anywhere.

It is understandable that some Catholics are disturbed at the changes renewal entails while others are impatient at the delay in implementing the decrees of a glorious Council. Piet Franzen has a good word for both groups when he says: "I am quite worried about something I see in every quarter of the Church: fear. The Pope, bishops, and religious superiors are fearful of what is happening in the Church. Personally, I oppose such lack of courage, because I think that it is extremely dangerous for the unity and strength of the Church. We must be courageous; we must have confidence in the Lord and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is the real spirit of Christianity."

JOHN T. MCGINN, C.S.P.

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The Relation Between Baptism and Faith

Hendrik Manders, C.Ss.R.

To undertake a dialogue with the readers of *Concilium* is not as simple as it may appear. First of all, we should know about each other—where we stand on a subject, particularly when we speak of the relation between baptism and faith, which concerns the most fundamental principles of the doctrine on justification, of the sacraments, of God's appearance in this world, of Christian anthropology and many other problems.

It makes a vast difference for purposes of discussion whether we begin with the question: "How do I find a merciful God?" (which looks on baptism as the sacrament of personal conversion, justification and sanctification), or whether we start with: "How does God appear in this world through baptism? How does he become again a living God in baptism?" (baptism as the manifestation of God). These questions of course are not mutually exclusive but imply each other, and yet how differently both faith and baptism operate according to which of these questions we begin with.

One steps into the baptismal water differently according to whether one thinks that faith uncovers the deepest meaning of human existence or whether one is convinced that in baptism we are dealing with divine realities. It makes a difference whether one thinks that grace is a purely immanent divine act and that, although it is a human reality, it is nevertheless essentially invisible and accessible only to the

faith, or whether one thinks that the incarnation of the Son of God implies essentially that grace becomes manifest in this world. To say that faith is only the condition or result of baptism is very different from saying that faith is achieved in baptism.

We could continue for a long time with this approach, and, in fact, we ought to so continue, because it is not merely a matter of facts and opinions. Theology is not merely an attempt to interpret scientifically the data of faith; it aims, at the same time, to make the authentic faith achievable in an authentic human way. Whatever opinion we may follow individually, within the Church we all have to go the same way. And while we all pursue the same way, it is important that we recognize each other as belonging to the same faith, and realize that whatever is being thought or said in theology, it all aims at preserving the heritage of the faith *intact*, which is not the same as *unchanged*.

Therefore, it seems important to me that my readers and I can find a common

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starting point when we begin to reflect on the relation between faith and baptism, even though there is not much that is new. In fact, one might even think that in recent times enough has been said about all this and that we might well keep silent. I hope that it is nevertheless possible to walk together on a road that may lead to the understanding of a few more or less generally accepted conclusions that have been reached in recent years.

This relative unanimity leads curiously to the conclusion that baptismal practice *must* vary, both liturgically and pastorally.

I THE FAITH THAT SEEKS GOD

Let us start with a point that is familiar to all of us: namely, that baptism is the sacrament of conversion and justification through faith. This implies as a minimum that no one can be justified through baptism without believing. Faith is at least a condition for the reception of baptism and for receiving it sincerely.

Thus far, no one has any doubts concerning this definition. That is precisely why it is useful to think a little further about this faith. What kind of faith is required as a condition for baptism, a way to justification? The Council of Trent describes this faith, this "beginning of justification," perhaps not completely but in its essential outline, as a progressive self-awareness of man in his relation to God in the light of the Gospel and as a way that leads to baptism. One might also say that this faith is described as a recognition of God as the one who, faithful to his promise, justifies the sinner gratuitously. This recognition is connected with the witness (kerygma) of the Church. One might also formulate this in a more modern sense and say that in this preliminary faith man discovers what it is to be "man." This faith uncovers for him the reality of his existence at its deepest level. In this way he discovers that to live means to be committed to conversion.

What this conversion contains is too complex for the present discussion. But in any case it means that in the first place man turns toward a faithful and true God; in relation to this, particular dogmatic

truths are relevant. In modern parlance one might say that this contains a conversion to one's fellow man. In effect, how could one truly believe in Jesus Christ without one's fellow man? But I would like to add that because faith embraces conversion, it is not enough to say that this faith only gives a deeper insight into human reality. No doubt it does give this insight into human reality, but it does so not merely to see it; it does so in order to make it real as the Gospel requires it to be.

This is important for our outlook on baptism. But it also implies some important conclusions insofar as the ecclesiastical preparation for baptism is concerned. The preliminary faith reaches us through "hearing." But this means at least that the Church—both the universal and the local Church—makes her voice audible in the world in one way or another by word or deed, so that a confrontation with her preaching can take place. For some people, particularly in the cultural environment of the West where the press and other means of communication have such an extensive influence, it is possible to have knowledge of the Church's preaching through personal study, personal and informal contacts and personal practice. In this way, one acquires this preliminary faith without formal contact with the Church. But it would appear normal that the formation and development of this faith should come about under the influence and guidance of the actually proclaiming Church. And this is the foundation of the catechumenate.

CATECHUMENATE: VARIOUS FORMS

History shows that this catechumenate can take various forms, not only insofar as the organization and plan are concerned, but also with regard to its "official" character. This may vary from the informal assistance of a layman—who then should be answerable for his candidate at baptism—to an official institution of, for example, a qualified group formed by the official representatives of the Church for the community. It may take a liturgical form or not. It is not possible to lay down norms that are universally valid. Rather, it would seem that every particular Church must make

such decisions in its own way according to its own needs and those of the candidate. Nevertheless, some general observations may be made.

From what has been said about the nature of this faith that precedes baptism, it follows that the formation of the candidate should not be primarily a matter of introducing him to the doctrinal faith of the Church, and certainly not to its full contents. This is clear from the fact that, at the time when it reached its highest peak, the official catechumenate put the initiation into the sacraments (baptism included) *after* baptism. Whether or not the catechumenate embraces a comprehensive doctrinal instruction will depend on the circumstances and on the Church's practice.

FORMATION OF THE CANDIDATE

But what certainly must be accomplished during this period is the formation of the candidate in faith in "God who justifies the sinner." This means that the essential message of the Gospel about man, about Jesus Christ, about the Father and the Spirit of Christ, must be brought out in such a way that a genuine "conversion" can take place, a genuine belief in a God who is actually engaged in making himself true in Christ in this world through us. The candidate for baptism must be confronted with what scripture calls "the way." This obviously includes some doctrinal instruction, but this instruction must serve what should really take place in the candidate himself.

Insofar as the liturgical form is concerned, I would like to say that it is not easy to state how this should be done. Various parts of our present baptismal ritual might be very satisfactory in some cases. But one can easily think of circumstances where this ritual cannot be used, either because of the present form of the ritual or because of the prayers. Thus the exorcisms seem to me very suitable in certain non-Western cultural milieus. In the West they seem to be impossible. It is simply a fact that the power of evil is experienced here in the West in a way that is very different from that expressed in the exorcisms. However this may be, every Church will have to

give its own expression to its own catechumenate. And this expression will vary again according to whether it is a communal catechumenate or a personal one. The important thing is that, whatever the form, it should be realistic and meaningful.

Once a Church has introduced a liturgical form for its catechumenate, it must be maintained that this is part of the sacrament of baptism. The reason is that such an ecclesial form makes explicit an essential element of baptism in which justification by faith is in the process of being achieved in a ritual: i.e., in an ecclesially visible manner. This essential element is precisely the progressive building up of the faith that justifies, insofar as this implies a conversion to the living God and to Christ the Lord. The sacrament of baptism begins to unfold itself in the catechumenate and manifests itself there as the "sacrament of faith."

If we think for a moment about the faith as it appears at this stage, we shall see that it is seen in various functions that are intimately connected with each other. There is, first of all, the Church as the community which believes that God's promises are truly fulfilled in Christ, that the Church is the community to which is imparted the Spirit who makes these promises come true even now. For it is in confrontation *with* and under the guidance of this faith that is announced to him that the faith of the baptismal candidate comes to life and develops. It is important to note here that the Church must proclaim this certainty in the catechumenate: "He who believes [i.e., who confesses this certainty of the Church] and is baptized [i.e., who joins this community] is saved."

CERTAIN YET ALWAYS SEEKING

But it is equally important that the baptismal candidate understand that this certainty also implies, for the Church, a constant seeking, and that he is initiated in the necessary "uncertainty" that is included in the certainty. At the moment this is surely not an easy task. But it is the more necessary as this uncertainty has come to the fore today. Otherwise this uncertainty would shock an unprepared person in that

basic certainty which the Church must proclaim to him in faithfulness to the Lord.

When the faith of the baptismal candidate develops in intimate union with this faith of the Church, it means that we are not concerned here with the unfolding of one or another neutral, metaphysical experience of God through self-reflection, even though such an experience is not alien to his faith. It means that he assimilates in his personal conviction that faith of the community with which he is engaged in dialogue. As an attitude, his faith is certainly a personal faith. The meaning of this attitude, however, is determined by two factors: that in this attitude he takes part in the fulfillment of the Church's faith, and that contact with him in whom the Church believes, Jesus Christ, God's faithful witness. This point will be more fully treated below. At the moment it is important to see that already during this period of preparation the faith, of which baptism is the sacrament, is the faith of the Church.

II THE FAITH THAT JUSTIFIES

A next step on which I think we can all agree might be described with the words of St. Basil: "The faith . . . is signified by baptism in water." The way in which Trent describes the development of the preliminary faith, shows that it reaches its climax in the demand to be baptized. It is more or less the same in our present baptismal ritual, and one may say that it has always been so, although expressed in different ways. After the candidate has confessed his faith, the question is put to him whether he wants to be baptized: *Vis baptizari?* And when he has replied in the affirmative and by implication has asked for baptism, the sacrament is administered. It follows as a reply to his confession and his request. Thus, "I baptize you" sounds like a solemn confirmation by the Church of the confession made by the neophyte.

His faith is sealed. What does this imply? First of all, it undoubtedly means that by baptizing him the Church accepts as authentic, and confirms, the candidate's confession and his request to join the Church which is implied in this (he says he

believes "in the holy, Catholic Church"). This acceptance includes all the consequences: he is recognized as a member of the community where God's promises are fulfilled; his faith in the forgiveness of sins is valid for him personally; he enters into communion with God, with Christ his redeemer and Lord, and with the Spirit who brings about this redemption in the Church. His belief that God justifies the sinner is, so to speak, returned to him as valid for him personally.

So far there is no difficulty. In other words, in our liturgy we still apply the words we have all learned: namely, that the sacraments bring about the grace which they signify. But if we look closer into the baptismal ritual and the doctrine of justification, we shall have to take a further step and say that not only does baptism seal the faith of the neophyte, but that this faith is there fulfilled in the full sense of the word. Moreover, we shall have to say that the Church's message of salvation, and so her faith, is made real in the dialogue between the baptizer and the baptized. And here particularly we must maintain that the object of the faith, the mystery of Christ—or, if one prefers, the "Christ event"—becomes real in the attitude of faith and the proclamation, the kerygma. All this implies a whole complex of concrete, real factors of salvation. Only in this way do we have a more or less complete view of the function of faith in baptism. It would seem worthwhile to clarify this as far as possible, but this is not exactly a simple matter.

PREACHING, FAITH AND BAPTISM

Perhaps the best thing is to begin with a quotation from Paul which describes tersely the various elements analyzed above and at the same time points beyond this: "The word [i.e., the word of *faith* which we preach] is near you, *on your lips and in your heart* because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved" (Rom 10, 8-10).

Here we see clearly, in a complementary parallelism, that preaching, faith and confession form one whole in the act of justification. And this is precisely what I am concerned with here. One may take it as theological tradition in the Catholic Church that God justifies man in the personal, free act of faith which he brings about in man through the Spirit, at least if we here understand by faith the full and free acceptance of the evangelical message as Paul sums it up in this text. If baptism is then truly the sacrament of justification, it means at least that in baptism the basic attitude of faith is given its definitive form.

But I think there is more to it. Not only does baptism bring about this basic attitude, but this attitude also becomes a full reality only then. In baptism the preliminary faith is given its really complete form, so that only then does it become real faith. This may sound peculiar, but this is how it appears to me.

NECESSITY OF PUBLIC CONFESSION

What happens here? The preliminary faith gropes toward the full surrender to the Gospel's message. In dialogue with the preaching, it must discover what the fact of preaching in itself already says: justification and salvation are not limited to inner personal experiences. It is an essential feature of what happened in and through Christ that salvation and justification are public events. They are events that take place in full daylight because they take place in the Church. Ultimately this is so because justification is not only concerned with my personal salvation in view of an invisible hereafter, but also with the manifestation of God in this world. To be saved, to be justified, means, as the above text said, that Jesus is the Lord and that God has raised him from the dead. Justification is the manifestation of God's justice and mercy in the life of the Church. If this is so, it is an essential part of my faith that it be manifested as a public confession of this conviction.

This is what takes place in baptism, as much to the faith of the neophyte as to

that of the Church. The baptismal questions and answers are not merely a matter of information about the conditions required for a valid baptism. They both belong to the confession of the final stage and as such are already part of baptism. Only in this final joining up with the community that possesses the promises and the final reception by the community does the faith acquire its final shape, which is to witness to God's justice. And our justice consists precisely in its manifestation of God as a just God: i.e., a God who in Christ restores all things openly to their just proportions, to their original meaning.

And this leads to a whole series of further questions, which I can only touch upon. They begin with the question: Is all this not mere theological fiction? How can baptism show that God restores all things to their original meaning when in actual fact Christian communities and Christian individuals contribute to the destruction of this order? Does God really restore all things to their original intent in Christ? Doesn't this doctrine of justification through baptism lead to the creation of "puritans and pirates?"

Let us start by confessing that the belief that God raised Christ from the dead allows us to recognize that God makes the impossible possible in and through and in spite of the human condition. I am pleading here for an indestructible hope of the Christian that there will be a new earth, a hope which ought to be as deeply rooted and as dynamic in our conviction as a Marxist's hope is rooted in his.

MANIFESTING GOD TO THE WORLD

But this is not the whole answer. We have to add that baptism means that the Christ-event takes place in the Church and in me. Baptism brings about in the Church what I believe: namely, that we are taken up into what God himself said must happen to the Lord at Jesus' baptism in the Jordan. If baptism means that through the faith we are incorporated in the paschal mystery, it nevertheless means this in a special way. We are baptized in the death and resurrection of Christ. But, as Mentz rightly pointed out, the believing entry into

the water also means that we are baptized in order that in our own life we may share in the fulfillment of the Lord's life on earth in the light of his passion. This means that each one's personal existence receives its proper significance in baptism: to follow the way toward God in Christ through the vicissitudes of this life.

And this, in turn, implies that we must live in such a way that God can become manifest to my brother as his Father. It means that, like the Lord, I must be concerned about my brother and committed to justice and peace. It means that the practice of my faith must show that even the apparently meaningless, the deglamorization of life and death itself have a meaning. The

same holds for the community of the faithful as such. Thus the faith of baptism is an appeal. Thus it becomes possible for God to become manifest as the living God in the human existence within this world, but we must share in the responsibility for this. St. Thomas said: "Because water is transparent it can receive light: and so it is fitting that it should be used in baptism, inasmuch as it is the sacrament of faith." Through the clearness of the water the light of the faith can reach us. It is this light by which we manifest God, "whoever or wherever he may be," to our brother in this world. How far we still are from the faith of our baptism!

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The Council's Teaching on Human Life

Rev. John Dourley, O.M.I.

In recent generations Catholic theology has been characterized by a rigid distinction between the natural and supernatural orders. This distinction has been most notably present in our traditional concepts of Christ and his redeeming activity, in our theology of grace and sanctification, in our idea of man and his earthly activity and in our eschatology. The sharpness of this distinction owed much to the way Scholastic theology was being presented.

The Scholastic system taught that man was born into a natural and ungraced state as a consequence of original sin. His nature, composed of body, soul and natural faculties, ordered man to a natural happiness. The system did admit that man's only true end was a supernatural union with God. But natural man stood in need of an elevating supernaturalization or divinization

to be reordered to this supernatural end and to be enabled to act efficaciously for its attainment.

Man was supernaturalized through the infusion into his soul of that ontological reality called sanctifying grace. As he was divinized in the core of his being by infused grace, so was he divinized in his faculties by the infused virtues which equipped them and him for supernatural activity. Thus, by infused faith, hope and charity man's natural powers of intellect and will were enabled to know, hope in, and love God in a way that was simply beyond the capacity of natural man. Hence, there was a need to possess grace in order to perform supernaturally meritorious works.

Christ in his redemption had again made available to man the grace man had lost in the fall. Thus Christ had "opened

the gates of heaven." Prior to the redemption grace was not available to man and, without grace, neither was heaven. Baptism communicated the germ of the supernatural life to the Christian and the other sacraments nourished and protected this new life in the Church. The Christian was thus able to live a life that was specifically different from the lives of non-Christians. Non-Christians might indeed be good people, but—so we used to teach—their goodness was purely natural. Their good actions and good attitudes had no salvational significance. The Christian lived a supernatural life. As long as he was in a state of grace, his actions and attitudes were supernatural, significant for salvation, and, indeed, meritorious.

SACRAMENTS AND THE LAST THINGS

In this natural-supernatural framework, the theological focus was on the sacramental system through which the supernatural life was mediated to the members of the Church. The main category in which the sacraments were understood was that of efficient causality. Christ was the principal agent who acted through the sacraments, as instrumental causes, to infuse grace into the soul of the believer. Such a view permitted authors to speak of the sacraments as "channels of grace."

The natural-supernatural framework also influenced the understanding of the last things and the value which the Christian attached to secular activity. The life of man in society was basically natural. What counted for the Christian was to live and die in the state of grace. The world was the inevitable scenery in which he worked out his eternal salvation. The promises of God, we suggested in our teaching, were fulfilled in heaven when the soul would enjoy the beatific vision. The wider view that Christ had come to establish the kingdom of God, and that man's efforts to transform life on this earth according to the divine will was in some way, however remote, a preparation for the establishment of the kingdom in glory, did not fit into a system where the natural and supernatural were rigidly separated. The dichotomy be-

tween the natural and supernatural led to religious individualism and a pious withdrawal from the world. Supernatural life centered around the formally religious and sacramental worship; natural life included the activities in "the world," which was often seen as an obstacle to the life of grace.

A deep study of St. Thomas and other great masters of the classic age of Scholasticism reveals that their view of the Christian life did not divide reality as rigidly into the natural and the supernatural. What cannot be denied, however, is that the Scholastic system, as expressed in the manuals of theology and popularized in sermons and books of religion, did present the rigid dichotomy described above.

A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN LIFE

The *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* has deepened and perhaps redirected our theological perspective on many of the above-mentioned topics. In its first description of Christ and his saving activity, the Constitution refers to Christ as him who "fully reveals man to man himself" (n. 22). Christ is described as both the image of God and "the perfect man" (n. 22). The conciliar text further suggests that Christ's influence on the Christian is of such nature that it leads the Christian to the fullness of his own humanity. "Whoever follows Christ, the perfect man, becomes himself more a man" (n. 41).

The document chooses not to describe Christ's redeeming influence on man in terms of an elevation of man to a supernatural state. Rather, it describes the Christian's sanctification in terms of an authentic humanization whereby the Christian, under Christ's influence through the Spirit, grows into Christ's perfect humanity. The document's inclination to speak of Christ's redeeming influence on man in terms of a

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humanization rather than in terms of a divinization may be of great import in the future development of our christology and soteriology.

The document extends the effects of Christ's earthly presence to every man. It states: "For, by his incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man" (n. 22). This statement would seem to be inimical to any theology that would limit the effects of Christ's saving activity to professed Christians or to those who are in sacramental and visible ecclesial communion with him. In fact, the document makes this quite explicit when it states that the Holy Spirit extends to all men the invitation to be associated with the paschal mystery. "For, since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God alone, in the paschal mystery" (n. 22). We note that in this passage the universal saving influence of Christ is not based on the mystery of the incarnation, but on the redeeming death of the Lord, his total victory by which the whole human family was brought into a new relationship with the Father.

HUMAN CONSCIENCE

The Constitution locates God's approach to every man in the depths of the human conscience. "There man is alone with God whose voice echoes in his conscience" (n. 16). Man's conscience is depicted as that profoundly personal area wherein Christians and all of humanity are united in their common openness to the divine impulse. The Constitution teaches that in the depths of the human conscience "Christians are joined to other men in the search for truth" (n. 16) and for the solution to their common human problems. The implication may well be that fidelity to conscience is the unique and yet universal way in which all men, Christians and non-Christians alike, open themselves to the mystery of redemption.

The conciliar document not only brings out the humanizing and universal aspects of Christ's redemption, it also closely relates

the incarnation to the consequent flow of human history. Thus, it states, "Christ entered the world's history as a perfect man, taking that history up into himself and summarizing it" (n. 38). In relating Christ, the perfect man, to humanity's historical development, the Constitution seems to outline a view of history wherein the process of humanization initiated by Christ in his redemptive life on earth is being continued by him, through his Spirit, throughout the course of human history.

Thus Christ through his Spirit is presented as continually animating humanity's historical efforts to grow into the perfect humanity which he reveals and to humanize its earthly condition. The document thus speaks of the glorified Christ who not only arouses in men's hearts "a desire for the age to come" but also stimulates "those noble longings by which the whole human family strives to make its life more human and to render the whole earth submissive to this goal" (n. 38).

OUR EARTHLY CONCERNS

Such a theology of man's progressive humanization initiated by Christ on earth and prolonged in history under the impetus of his Spirit is fundamentally incompatible with an eschatology that would minimize the Christian's commitment to his society in the interests of his supernatural life. On the contrary it seems to unite the Christian's secular activity with his specifically religious life. Thus the Constitution teaches that an eschatological hope should not diminish but intensify the Christian's earthly concerns (n. 21). It encourages "believers and unbelievers alike . . . to work for the rightful betterment of this world in which all alike live" (n. 26). It calls those "mistaken" who "shirk their earthly responsibilities" because they "have here no abiding city" (n. 43). It describes man's efforts to make the earth "a dwelling worthy of the whole human family" as a fulfillment of the "design of God" (n. 57). It further explains God's design as that divine plan whereby man perfects himself in the perfection of earthly creation (n. 57). Moreover such earthly endeavor is closely related to the

work of the "great Christian commandment" of charity (n. 57).

Consistent with the specifically religious value it attributes to man's secular activity, the Constitution speaks of "the triumphs of the human race" as "a sign of God's greatness and the flowering of his mysterious design" (n. 34). It applauds man's successes in subduing and humanizing his material world as an extension of his human responsibility over it. It forcefully affirms that Christianity does not impede man in his efforts "to build up the earth" but "more stringently" binds the Christian "to do these very things" (n. 34).

A
FULLY
HUMAN ORDER
ON EARTH

In the face of these repeated references to man's efforts to humanize his world, as a consequence of Christ's redemptive incarnation and his continued impregnation of human history with his Spirit, it becomes more difficult to bracket certain areas of man's activity as supernatural or religious and other areas as natural and secular. The christology and anthropology of the Constitution, which so closely relate the effects of redemption to the human effort to establish a fully human order on earth, also tend to diminish the concept of a radical discontinuity between man's earthly endeavor and the "new earth" which Christ will inaugurate at his second coming.

The Constitution may thus force theologians to render more precise what is meant by "flight from the world." The Constitution would seem to indicate that the Christian has a serious and specifically Christian responsibility to work for the betterment of this world, and that his religious

concern cannot be separated from his earthly concern without a grave distortion of the message of Christ.

Thus, in certain key sectors of theology the Constitution surpasses a rigid natural-supernatural framework. The absence from its pages of the phraseology proper to this framework may be more than accidental. If Christ's sanctification of man consists in his leading man into his true humanity, then redemption is not best described as the supernatural infusion into man of a principle of divinization. If Christ's redeeming activity touches all men and if the Spirit approaches all, then all men of goodwill would seem to share in the paschal mystery.

MEMBERSHIP
IN THE CHURCH

Membership in the Church would be the unique opportunity to which men are called to partake fully in a more intense and personal relationship with Christ, in communion with those similarly graced. If all man's endeavor to render himself, his society and his material universe more fully human is Spirit-provoked, then it is not the distinction but the union between the sacred and the secular orders and between natural and supernatural activity that becomes apparent.

In presenting these theological themes the purpose of the Constitution may have been to induce further Christian reflection on them and not to render them immobile through too precise definitions. The task of the present-day theologian is to explore further the theological implications of this unitive vision of human history and, perhaps, to show more clearly the continuity of this understanding with the valid elements of the traditional reflections on the mysteries of the faith.

A Catechetical Event

New Dutch

Catechism for Adults (1)

The new Dutch catechism for adults—or, as the bishops of the Netherlands term it, “a new effort to make the message of Jesus resound (*catechein* is Greek for re-echo) in the world today”—will be of intense interest to the Christian world as a whole. It aims at rendering the new approach to Christian life and doctrine which found expression in the Second Vatican Council. As the first full postconciliar catechism, it represents a major thrust forward into regions to which all Catholics feel drawn—by curiosity, by their vital interest in the new developments of the self-understanding of the Church, and even by the fascination of the strange, uncomfortable “winds of change.”

Coming from the Netherlands, the catechism has also a special interest, because the outside world has been hearing of it as a sort of distressful country, where clashes with authority, including the Holy Office, ecumenical advances such as intercommunion on an undreamt-of level, and doctrinal ambiguities on the nature of the eucharist have been only a few of the upheavals which have been signalled or rumoured. What is certainly true is that Dutch theology has been alert and on the move, and the catechism reflects a new approach to the whole of the ancient, unchanging faith.

This is not a catechism of the “question and answer” type. As the bishops say in their introduction, the short, sharp formulas of the older catechisms lent themselves

well to memory work—when the reader was supposed to be an entirely passive recipient, who had just to be notified briefly of what he had to believe and what he had to do.

As a catechism for adults, the new work takes plenty of space—it is a voluminous effort extending over six hundred pages—to stimulate and ventilate inquiry, which it then seeks to answer in the light of the gospel. Naturally, it supposes the full Catholic belief in the reader as he starts. “The paschal message is the centre of this proclamation of the faith. If the tidings of Jesus’ resurrection is taken out of it, there would not be a single page of the book with any value.”

The structure of the work is “historical.” It begins with the actual, historical question of the mystery of existence and the meaning of life, as it presented itself to the first converts of the Netherlands under St. SERVATIUS and St. WILLEBRORD, and as it presents itself anew today. A second part deals with the “way to Christ” in history, concentrating on the Old Testament. The third part is entitled “the Son of Man,” the “good tidings” of the New Testament. A fourth, and by far the longest part, treats of “Christ’s way”—the history of the Church—which is then taken up by the

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history of the individual Christian, from baptism through the other sacraments to his moral life in all its dimensions.

The last part deals with the "last things," and concludes with "God"—which does not mean that this catechism ends where the others usually begin, but simply that the "attributes" of God are only summed up when their content has already been filled out and given life and warmth by the full exposition of the revelation which came, not just as doctrine, but as a history of salvation.

PART I

THE MYSTERY OF EXISTENCE

The catechism begins on the tone of the famous opening of BLONDEL'S *L'Action*: "Yes or no, has life a meaning?", and continues with an analysis of human quests and yearnings which strives to show that man has a perpetual, unsated demand for light and happiness—and goodness, as voiced in his conscience—which can only be answered by an absolute good and an infinite and eternal beauty. This is really the "fourth way" of St. Thomas for proving the existence of God, and a basic approach of the *philosophia perennis* from PLATO on, given its most famous expression in St. AUGUSTINE'S "Our heart was made for thee, O God, and it cannot rest content until it rests in thee."

The novelty and interest are in the treatment: there is first a brief "anthropology" of man, existing with others, in the world, and caught up in the mechanism of the world, but in growing freedom, challenged by the absurdity of suffering and death in the face of his longings. His origins, discussed in the context of his ancient evolutionary past, and his own future, guarantee nothing. But the real dynamism of his search insists on the existence of the Infinite—a rational conclusion, but one in which reason is involved with the whole of life and hence with many hindrances, so that "facts show that in general it is only when men are acquainted with God by faith that they can surrender themselves to the directives of reason."

Then there is the clear existence of evil, which makes the call that the Infinite should speak even more insistent. With this

we are brought to the message that in Jesus of Nazareth the Infinite has spoken, which opens up the way to the main purpose of the book. "Since the manifestation of God's glory has taken place within the human process, this book will follow the order of history." The first part ends with a discussion of the objection that the existence of God is only a "projection" of our need for security.

This summary has, of course, necessarily reduced the lively discussion, sometimes trenchant, sometimes verging on the sentimental, to a rather abstract outline. It seems, however, a fair enough picture of the argument to raise here at once the question of its "ecumenical" value—a value deliberately sought throughout the book.

There is a sense in which even as radical a Protestant as BULTMANN allows a certain significance to the great dictum of St. AUGUSTINE quoted above. But on the whole, Protestant theology would suggest that to claim God as an answer to man's needs and longings is to reduce his transcendence, his "wholly otherness," to make faith a sort of necessary response to reason, to give the Infinite some sort of proportion to the finite. It is the question of "natural theology," of grace "crowning" nature, of the "natural desire" for the supernatural. But as the word "supernatural" seems to be deliberately avoided throughout the book, in deference no doubt to the categories of ordinary thinking, it would perhaps be unwise to insist on this point. At any rate, the sinfulness and helplessness of man are brought out well enough later to ease all possible tensions.

PART II

THE WAY TO CHRIST

This part begins with "the way of the nations." They are seen as "seeking God (Acts 17:26f),—a "high God" even in the most primitive cultures, a King among the gods of ancient polytheism. Succinct analyses of three great world religions, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, are followed by descriptions of Chinese "universalism," scientific humanism and Marxism. Their defects should not blind Christians to the truths they may contain or distort. "In the groping search of mankind for God

there lives the groping search of God for mankind." But "in Israel, as we believe, our creator began to cleanse and elevate the existing human movement towards the deepest truth"—in an almost imperceptible, gradual fashion.

The "way of Israel" is described as the coming of God's revelation through wonderful works, through his words about these works, and through the committing of the revelation to writing in the sacred books. This revelation is seen as progressive: "We can see in the Old Testament a growing refinement, a leavening through the Spirit of Yahweh. Contact with him is never fruitless. This is what makes the Old Testament so attractive. We are always forced to look forward to where it is heading. Something develops, something grows from the lower to the higher, always upwards and outwards." In the early days God's covenant seemed to bear more on the mutual loyalty and welfare of the people, on personal conscientious life in the time of the prophets, on being human towards all and looking forward to the deliverer to be sent by God, in the time after the Exile.

FACT AND EXPERIENCE

This evolutionary view of the Old Testament revelation will not, perhaps, commend itself universally, but at least it may help to bring out the element of sheer promise in it. Of more immediate interest is the presentation of the "miracles" of the Old Testament, and the apologetics for the "rooting out of the Amalekites" and so on. After a discussion of the various literary *genres* used in the ancient East, the author takes up the essential reality which made Israel's literary form its own: "The story from Genesis 12 on recounts a historical process, but in the way in which this people writes history. Israel was determined to bring out the great basic lines of the facts. What these are, we have already seen: God's creative covenant, human faithlessness, divine renewal. Israel had experienced this in certain facts. These, like every great human fact, went hand in hand with great inner experiences.

"These too belong to the fact. An event is like an iceberg, one tenth above the sur-

face, nine tenths under the water. The inward experience is the major portion of the event. A group of hard-pressed nomads escapes through a branch of the Red Sea which has been dried up by the wind. A mighty experience, of which a whole people never ceased to speak. But they had no means of describing the psychology of the inner experience, as in the modern novel. This was a literary *genre* that did not yet exist. But then how could the nine-tenths of the iceberg, the conviction of Yahweh's help, be described? The great experience was expressed through a great story. This was their literary *genre*. The outward facts were given greater dimensions, to do justice to the greatness of the experience. Marvellously beautiful stories were told, whose very exaggerations evoke the historical event better than sheer documentation could have done."

The development of this view through the theme that the great miracle of Israel was *the whole history of Israel* (including God's works, his words, the composition of the sacred books as part of the "fact" of revelation) leads finally to a discussion of the "spiritual sense" of the Old Testament. Now "the old stories are to be read as symbols of the new salvation," since the whole Bible is inspired by the one Spirit. Part II also contains brief "introductions" to each of the books of the Old Testament, an outline of the "sources" of the Pentateuch and some words on the "canon" as understood by various religious bodies. What we have quoted rather fully above on the nature of the "event" as outward facts and inner experience is undoubtedly the most striking, if not entirely novel, contribution.

PART III SON OF MAN

Here even the non-Bible-reading Catholic will be on more familiar ground, especially as the "Son of Man" section, from the appearance of JOHN THE BAPTIST to the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, actually falls into a sort of "Life of Our Lord." It will therefore be sufficient to note the special features. The authors are quite conscious that the gospels are not history or biography in the modern sense of the term: "The first message which we

discover in the oldest parts of the New Testament does not tell of Jesus' youth, or even the course of his life, but proclaims the highpoint of his existence: his death, and the resurrection by which God rescued him from death. This divine event outshone all else. What was told first of all was that he lives. And when later on his life and his words were preached, this was done in the light of faith in who he is."

LITERARY GENRE

So far so good. However this very just principle seems hardly to be fully evaluated in the sequel. Is the historical *genre* of the gospels adequately explained by saying that "they were not interested in the precise sequence of the events or the precise place?" Or by saying that "the sense of the presence of One who lives explains a certain freedom in the transmission of his words?" A catechism for modern adults should surely be more outspoken on the major questions of New Testament criticism—which are not confined to the "Infancy Narratives," where indeed some concessions are made, such as "they were not composed without historical recollections." The rather "fundamentalist" treatment of the New Testament, in contrast to the less conservative approach to the Old, is no doubt due to the diversity of authorship behind the catechism, which was finally written by one author, but based on the contributions of one hundred and fifty.

Consistency on such terms is hardly possible, but it hardly seems too much to ask that the principle applied to the Old Testament—"event is outward fact plus inward experience"—should at least have been tested out on the New. The inconsistency brings with it also another disadvantage. The letters of St. PAUL are passed over in a paragraph (except where his traditions on the resurrection and the eucharist are appealed to). But St. PAUL's great experiences, or insights, or inspiration, should surely form an essential part of the New Testament event—if the principle applied to the Old Testament is valid.

More provision might therefore have been made for the "higher criticism." In practice, however, it is catered for sufficiently by the actual treatment of the great events. In the Infancy Narratives, the stress is on the "deep theological meaning." The virginal conception means profoundly that "this birth, is infinitely greater than that of any man, has no relationship at all to what men can accomplish of themselves." The great mystery of the incarnation is discussed in the light of "the efforts of man to minimize it"—which brings in Arianism, Nestorianism and Monophysitism (described, strangely enough, as a docetism which denied all but appearance to Christ's humanity). The climax of the commentary is that the Council of Chalcedon declared that "in the one person of Christ existed in full not only the divine but also the human nature of Christ. In a real man the real God appears . . . who and what God is, we discover in Jesus, who was born, died, and rose again, and lives on in his Spirit in the Church."

NATURE OF SIN

This principle, so powerfully stated, is consistently applied throughout the catechism, and with the most marked effect perhaps in the treatment of "sin." As a refusal of God, it always appears in the concrete as a refusal of man, as hatred, harshness, coldness, neglect or scandal; and in the same way, the "law of Christ" is a rediscovery of the real values embodied, by the incarnation as it were, in each individual fellowman, so that "morals" from beginning to end are vitalized and stamped by the demands of the two great "circumcensive" commandments, love of God and of the neighbour. One happy effect is that "living in sin" takes on a new and unavoidable connotation of a life of haughtiness, vindictiveness and wilful discord, and the hierarchy of "Pharisee" and "sinner" is re-established in the true sense of the gospel.

(To be continued)

Books Received

The Sunday Homily
John J. Burke, O.P., Editor
Thomist Press. Paperback. \$2.75

These are the lectures and reports from the Workshop on Renewal in Scripture and Liturgical Preaching held at the Catholic University, in June, 1965. All the papers are worthwhile and discuss wisely the main problems connected with effective preaching today. The theological, scriptural and liturgical aspects are admirably covered. And good papers treat phases of preaching that are too frequently neglected. These latter include: "The Theory of Communication" by William Graham; "The Influence of Naturalism on Contemporary Social Goals" by Robert P. Mohan; and "Creative Writing for the Preacher" by Leo Brady. Inspiring and helpful for anybody concerned with the improvement of sermons in the renewed Church.

On Trying To
Be Human
Rosemary Haughton
Templegate. \$4.95

Mrs. Haughton is a convert from Judaism and mother of nine children. Writer of numerous articles, she has recently won new praise for her excellent book on religious education "Beginning Life in Christ." (Newman.) In all her writing, she exhibits wide reading, striking originality of thought and expression. Here she is at her best.

She is deeply concerned at the gap between the wisdom of the Christian tradition in theology and spirituality and the living experience of our contemporaries. People of noble aspirations live an intense personal life but find what they know of the Christian faith to be drab and irrelevant to their absorbing concerns. The writer discovered for herself many rewarding links between the two. And she tries to show some of the bridges between the Gospel

and the gropings of those who seek personal fulfillment.

In her treatment, she describes the main steps and stages in human development in the light of Christian teaching. Longing for liberty, the decision to seek it, the relationships this gradually entails, how passion helps one emerge from isolation and how the individual is fulfilled in community. She has many wise things to say about moral codes, suffering—and on sin, repentance, faith, temptation and love.

Some may judge that she is more effective in describing the reality of lived experience than in bringing the fullness of Christian tradition to bear on contemporary humanism. She can, however, bring the two into a closer, more vital and understandable relationship for numerous readers.

Facing God
William H. Quieri, S.J.
Sheed. \$4.95

This book should be of considerable help to many Catholics today. It is made to order for those who, though they are convinced of the necessity of interiorizing their Christian lives, find it difficult to master some of the great new books on prayer.

Nobody maintains that Christian renewal is merely a reorganization of Church structures or only a renewal in our thinking. But many do feel uneasy at the lag between their efforts at external renewal and the interior renewal *aggiornamento* is ultimately meant to serve. Both are necessary, but few have any reason to be happy at the stage of "reflective" prayer they have reached.

The author has dug deeply into the modern masters on prayer, without neglecting some oldsters. He quotes generously from men like Guardini, Schillebeeckx, Rahner, Haring and others. These references are invaluable in themselves. But the book

is far from being merely an anthology. The author has pondered these "greats" and made their thought his own. And he presents these insights in a fresh synthesis that is attractive, understandable and practical.

Vatican II does represent a renewed spirituality. And *Facing God* is of great help in showing how to encounter and communicate with God in his word, in the liturgy during its renewal, but also in the world, the desolate and in the friendships born of authentic Christian love.

Christ in
Our World
Richards and De Rosa
Bruce. \$3.95

This book discusses, in an unusual way, four of the sacraments: baptism, eucharist, penance and matrimony. Father Hubert J. Richards is a noted scripture scholar and treats of each of these sacraments from the historical and biblical background, showing how the great acts of God culminated and were perfected in the great acts of Christ. His chapters trace the sacraments to our Lord and describe the New Testament data.

Father Peter de Rosa is one of England's able theologians who devotes his talents to furthering Britain's catechetical movement. His chapters are directed towards explaining these sacraments in their contemporary significance. He relates them to Christ's continuing presence in the Church. And he also is concerned to point out ways in which the sacramental celebrations might be made attractive and understandable to modern man.

Adult Baptism and
the Catechumenate
Johannes Wagner, Editor
Paulist Press. \$4.50

This is volume 22 of the *Concilium* series on "Theology in the Age of Renewal." It is likely to prove to be one of the most helpful books in the entire collection. The renewed understanding of missionary work taught by the Council has yet to be fully understood. Apostolic outlook and methods are, at present, somewhat con-

fused and fumbling. This is particularly the case with "convert" work here at home.

The Congregation of Rites, in 1962, restored to the Church an authentic liturgical catechumenate. And the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy strengthened and carried further this particular reform. In time this, along with the other conciliar teachings, can revolutionize the missionary apostolate of the Church. But the historical, theological and liturgical foundation for all this needs first to be understood.

This book, in this reviewer's opinion, makes a major contribution towards this comprehension. (Some valuable chapters are also devoted to Church music). But some dozen chapters are concerned with the meaning and practice of the catechumenate in its basic aspects. It is not a how-to-do-it book and does not provide a blueprint which will be applicable everywhere. But it does discuss the fundamental questions from which wise adaptations can be determined for mission outlook and practice in particular countries.

J.T.M.

GUIDE

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GUIDE

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Guide Lights

GETTING INTO THE MAIN STREAM . . .

Volume 22 of *Concilium*, just out, is entitled "Adult Baptism and the Catechumenate." A chapter from this volume entitled "The Relation Between Baptism and Faith" is reprinted in this issue. The appearance of a volume with this title marks some kind of milestone in the re-establishment of the catechumenate. We can now expect a great deal more discussion and writing on the subject. At this point, therefore, it might be well to make a few general reflections about this important re-discovery.

AN UP-DATED INQUIRY CLASS? . . .

The first thing that should be noted about the catechumenate is its ecclesial character. It is not simply the old inquiry class with a few gimmicks and liturgical trappings. It belongs to an entirely different genre and I suppose the best way to differentiate the two would be to say that the catechumenate at its best reflects the *parish* in all its essentials, whereas the inquiry class reflects the *school*. This points up immediately one of the salient differences, namely, that the inquiry class was most concerned with religious instruction while the catechumenate has a much broader purpose. It instructs, yes, but only as one element in a wider spectrum of Christian formation. The proper understanding of the ecclesial character of the catechumenate is essential if its operation is to be effective.

OFFICIAL STATUS IN THE CHURCH . . .

In the Constitution on the Church of Vatican II, the status of a catechumen receives official recognition. His presence in the catechumenate identifies him with the Church in a way that simply attending religious instruction classes could not. It is true that even in the latter case his inten-

tion (if present) to embrace the Catholic faith does give him a real relationship with the Church. However, this is an invisible one and cannot be the subject of any ecclesiastical status. In the case of the catechumenate, however, because this is in a very real way the Church herself, the catechumen's presence in it can receive some kind of official recognition, and does. This is signified usually by the liturgical ceremony of enrollment wherein the new catechumen publicly proclaims his intention of membership in the Church, and the Church, on her side welcomes him to the Catholic community. There is really no way in which this can be done in the inquiry class unless it be through a private exchange between the priest-instructor and the inquirer, and this, of course, has no official status.

THE SACRAMENT OF FAITH . . .

Theologically, this kind of status can be recognized because the catechumenate is recognized as part of the sacrament of baptism. It is the time and the place where the sacrament is administered, and this makes sense when baptism is given in stages. Spread over the whole period of the catechumenate, in a very real way the latter becomes very much part of the sacrament. Baptism thus begins when the catechumen comes to believe, and it ends when he is finally sealed by the pouring of water. In this fashion, his initiation into the Church is truly a sacramental step and is brought about, in part at least, through the operation of the very grace of the sacrament.

THE TYRANNY OF TIME . . .

The article referred to above points out clearly the interaction between faith and the sacrament of baptism, a fact which cannot easily be seen in the case of either infant baptism or where the ritual is carried out in one step. In both cases there is no opportunity to observe the effects. In the first, because they can't be observed in a

child, and in the second, because there is no time. However, if we take the relationship between sacrament and faith seriously then it becomes both logical and desirable to spread the administration of baptism over a period of time long enough to permit its grace-action to take effect on the growing faith of the catechumen. At the same time, if, in the catechesis, this inter-relationship is stressed to the catechumens, then they are not apt to grow restive even though the period of catechumenate may be prolonged. One of the great objections to the introduction of the catechumenate in the American parish is that it takes too much time. Most of the experience that has formed our judgment of what is a reasonable time to prepare a person for the Church has been based pretty much on instruction rather than formation. The point of diminishing return is reached much more quickly in religious instruction than it is in the more diversified, less intellectual, and more religious process of formation that goes on in the catechumenate. The French experience in catechumenate indicates that people are willing to spend years in this category provided that it is a spiritually enriching process.

THE PROBLEM OF FOLLOW-UP . . .

No single element in the catechumenate can be considered in isolation, and certainly no judgment about its proper duration should be made in a vacuum. A relevant factor in gaining a new time perspective is the matter of follow-up. For many years in the inquiry class this was the one aspect with which there was almost universal dissatisfaction. It was generally recognized that contact was quickly lost with converts and, without considerable effort, little follow-through could be realistically achieved. The main reason for this was that few converts established a strong personal relationship with their parish during their period of instruction. Their acquaintance was pretty much limited to the priest-instructor and the person who had brought them to class. Consequently, once they were received into the Church the relationship with the priest-instructor was broken and, if the Catholic friend did not happen to belong to the same parish as the new convert, even this single link with the local people of God was not operative. The catechumenate, however, to the degree that it really reflects the parish as a whole, and especially, to the extent that it incorporates strong lay representation in its operations, does serve as a living

link between the catechumen and his parish. All of the elements and some of the people of that parish life are present from the first day of his enrollment. Their presence and influence serve as an ecclesial backdrop against which the catechumen develops his faith and sense of the Church. An effective catechumenate should take care of the problem of follow-up once and for all.

THE NEED TO HURRY . . .

Another factor operative in the inquiry class was the anxiety of many to enter the Church before marriage. A good deal of this was due to pressure from the Catholic family, in many cases simply so that there could be a nuptial Mass. This pressure should no longer be operative under the recent marriage legislation. Whatever justification may exist for the practice of rushing inquirers through a course of instruction so that they might be baptized before marriage, a consideration of the commitment involved in both marriage and entry into the Church would make it seem advisable to separate these in time. Marriage between a Catholic and a catechumen can be every bit as much a family affair and Catholic union as is possible without the actual baptismal certificate. And there is a good deal of reason to encourage this kind of procedure. In this way, the two most important steps in the catechumen's life can be approached with something like the preparation that each deserves.

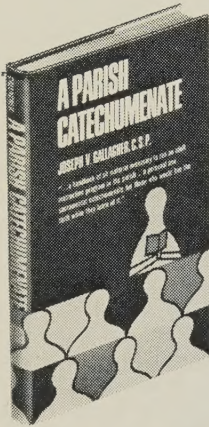
DEVELOPING THE CATECHUMENATE . . .

Perhaps it is a bit premature to rate a parish catechumenate so highly. Obviously, there are a great many imperfections and limitations in its present uncertain development. However, they do not appear to be inherent ones but rather the natural limitations of infancy. Better liturgical forms in the baptismal ritual, as well as other expressions of the communal aspects of Christian faith are badly needed. Some of the inadequacy of the present liturgy probably will best be demonstrated in a catechumenate and it is reasonable to hope that in time this need will be apparent to many. Meanwhile, the process of incorporating every essential element of the Church into a parish catechumenate will not only enrich the Christian initiation of the catechumens who participate in it, but should also bring the Catholics engaged in such an undertaking to a deeper and more personal understanding of their Church.

JOSEPH V. GALLAGHER, C.S.P.

MAY 15 1967

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catechumenate for those
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while they learn it.**



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